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THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

A SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY AT LEWISBURG,

February 22d, 1883.

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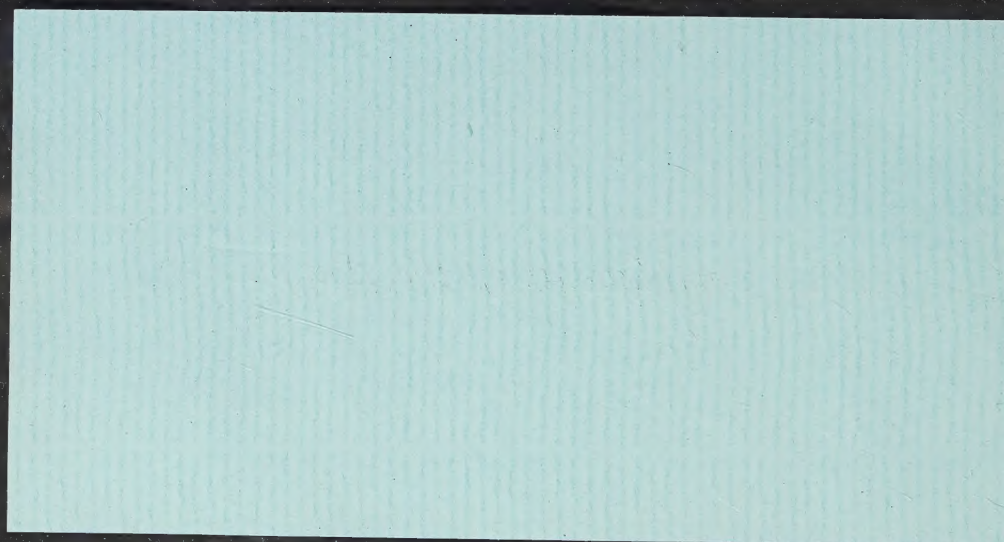
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THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

A SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY AT LEWISBURG

ON THE

Day of Prayer for Colleges, February 22d, 1883.

By GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN,

Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA:

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CORRESPONDENCE.

UNIVERSITY AT LEWISBURG,
FEBRUARY 24TH, 1883.

Rev. George Dana Boardman, D. D.,

MY DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:—At their meeting this morning the Faculty of the University by a unanimous vote directed me to express to you their gratitude for the memorable discourse delivered by you before the University on the Day of Prayer for Colleges, and they desire to join with the President of the Board of Trustees, Mr. William Bucknell, who has thoughtfully and generously offered to have the sermon printed, in requesting that you kindly consent to its publication and at your convenience furnish a copy of the discourse for the printer.

Trusting that it may be your pleasure to comply with this request, I am

Very sincerely yours,

DAVID J. HILL.

PHILADELPHIA, FEBRUARY 27TH, 1883.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:—Your courteous favor of the 24th instant, informing me that the Faculty have formally requested me to give to the public the sermon delivered before the University at Lewisburg on the Day of Prayer for Colleges, and also that the President of the Board of Trustees, Mr. William Bucknell, has generously offered to defray the expenses of publication, is at hand.

Deferring to your judgment as wiser than my own, I accede to the request with which you honor me.

May the God of our fathers make the publication a blessing to the youths of our land.

Assuring you and your colleagues of my warm personal esteem, I remain, my dear sir,

Faithfully yours,

GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN.

President DAVID J. HILL.

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THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

"I will harden his heart." Exodus, IV, 21.

A Frequent Scripture.

Exodus vii. 3.

Exodus ix. 12.

Exodus x. i.

Exodus x. 20.

Exodus x. 27.

Exodus xi. 10.

Exodus xiv. 8.

Romans ix. 17, 18.

Exodus ix. 16.

It is God's solemn declaration concerning Pharaoh. Nor does this fearful saying stand alone. We read: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart;" again: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart;" again: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart;" again: "I have hardened his heart;" again: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart;" again: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart;" again: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart;" once more: "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh: 'For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth;' so then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth."

A Grave Problem.

And here a serious moral difficulty arises: How shall we reconcile God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart with God's infinitely perfect

character? It is really a very grave problem. If it is literally true that God did actually, by force of his own will, harden Pharaoh's heart, deliberately causing him to become more and more sinful, then I must say, and will say, that God did a wicked thing, and my conscience is absolved from the duty of allegiance to him. For I am under no moral obligation to worship what my moral sense tells me is an unrighteous Deity. Indeed, it would be simply impossible; for I can not really adore what is not in itself inherently adorable. In other words, if God is not absolutely perfect, then he is not GOD; he is only a god, like partial Jove, or vengeful Thor, or sleepy Brahm, or any other heathen deity. How then shall we reconcile the Scriptural assertion that God hardened Pharaoh's heart with the Scriptural representations of God as being infinitely perfect? It is, let me repeat, an exceedingly grave problem, not to be disposed of, on the one hand, by summary dismissal, nor, on the other hand, by oracular deliverances. It demands from us a reverent attempt at solution. May the Spirit of all grace then especially help us as I proceed, first of all, to remind you of a few general principles which I trust will serve as hints toward the solution.

Man is Morally
Free.

And, first, man is morally free. I enter into no discussion of the theological ques-

tion concerning "man's natural and moral ability or inability." That is a metaphysical subtlety, good enough it may be for mental gymnastics, but useless, and worse than useless, as a contribution to the moral life. Enough for me that I know that man, practically speaking, has the power of moral choice. If he has not, cease appealing to motives, close the avenues to academic honors, abolish the penitentiaries. Deny man's capacity of moral choice, and you deny man's personal accountability, and annihilate manhood itself. Fallen as man is, he can, if he chooses, do

I. Kings xviii. 21.

right. He can choose between following Jehovah and following Baal. I know, indeed, that it is God alone "from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." Nevertheless, Divine grace, practically speaking, is really operant only as human choice is co-operant with it. While

Phil. ii. 12, 13.

it is true that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to work for his good pleasure, it is also true that we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. In other words God, almighty though he is, can never compel me to do right against my own consent. Could he do that, my doing right would be the iron servility of a thrall, not the glad loyalty of a freeman. My righteousness—if I may use so high a word in so low a

sense—would be as mechanical and soulless as the necessary rise of a vapor or the necessary fall of a hailstone.

Rev. iii. 20.

Although the infinitely patient Saviour will stand and knock all day and all night at the door of my heart, he will never force his entrance; if he ever enters, it is because I heard his knocking, and myself drew the bolt, and, opening the door, gave him welcome. This, then, is our first point: Man is morally free.

Yet Man is also
under Law.

Nevertheless, secondly, man is at the same time under law. Believe me, young friends, this is as true of man's moral nature as it confessedly is true of man's bodily nature. And it is a part of man's freedom to adjust himself spirit-wise to moral law, just as it is a part of man's freedom to adjust himself body-wise to physical law. For example: The spiritual law of love no more conflicts with man's moral freedom than does the physical law of gravitation conflict with man's bodily freedom; in fact, the moral law of love drawing to the eternal centre is the complement of the physical law of gravitation. Both nature and morals find their gravitating centre in God. And moral law is as inexorable as is physical law. True, we talk about "breaking the laws of God;" but the language is manifestly loose. Instead of our being able to break God's laws, it is God's laws which, if we do not obey them,

will most assuredly break us. In other words, there is no more possibility of chance or instability in the realm of moral law than there is in the realm of natural law. This, then, is our second point: *Man is under law.*

**Man is under the
Law of Heredity.**

Thirdly, man is under the law of moral genealogy, or, to use the modern philosophical phrase, the law of heredity. Nor is this law of heredity a modern discovery. It was distinctly enunciated nearly two thousand years ago at a memorable night-conference between a Judean rabbi and a Galilean carpenter:—

John iii. 6.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” That is to say: Like begets like, and can beget no otherwise. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and can never by any possibility become anything but flesh: that which is born of the spirit is spirit, and can never by any possibility become anything but spirit. Evolution of species, along the axis of an archetypal idea, is doubtless true in the material world. But between matter and spirit there is an unbridgeable, infinite chasm, and therefore material flesh can never develop into material spirit. Accordingly, let me remark in passing, Christ's doctrine of the new birth is profoundly philosophical. Just because the law of heredity is absolutely without exception—that which is

born of the flesh being inevitably flesh, and that which is born of the spirit being inevitably spirit—we ought not to marvel at the Lord's application of the law of heredity to the moral world, saying to you and me, as he did to Nico-

demus:—"That which is born of the flesh is

flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit; marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again, anew, from above." You do not marvel at the law of bodily inheritance; indeed, it is one of the accepted basal stones of the modern doctrine of environment, and also of the modern sociology. Why then marvel at the Galilean philosopher's application of the law of heredity to the moral realm? Were it in this realm ever otherwise, were there ever among all the untold myriads of humanity past, present, future, one single exception to the Lord's de-

claration—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee,

Except a man be born anew, from above, he can not see the kingdom of God"—that exception would be indeed a marvel, a monstrous anomaly: for it would be a contradiction of the law of heredity, a reversal and upheaval of the very system of human nature as now constituted. Ah, the world's true hope is not development, but re-generation; not evolution, but re-volution. The announcement then, "Ye must be born again," is not a new and

special edict by the founder of Christianity; it is written in the very constitution of humanity. If any one ought to accept unquestioningly Christ's doctrine of the New Birth, it is the scientist. The law of heredity settles the point. Physical science holds us to inevitable orthodoxy here.—But to recur to the point immediately in hand: The law of heredity, surveyed in its moral bearing, means the law of moral self-reproduction. That is to say: Man is not only heir to his environment, inheriting, for example, the circumstances of parents, birthplace, nursing, early training, and the like; he is also heir to himself, inheriting his own character. He repeats himself in himself. And each repetition is intenser than the preceding; each bad act becomes the sire of many bad acts, even as, thank God, each good act becomes the sire of many good acts. In other words, he illustrates in himself the law of the harvest:

Gal. vi. 7.

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” The law holds absolutely in the vegetable world. If a man sows wheat, he will reap from that wheat, not tares, but wheat. If he sows tares, he will reap from those tares, not wheat, but tares. The law holds with equal absoluteness in the spiritual world. If a man sows righteousness, he will reap from that righteousness, not sinfulness, but righteousness. If he sows sinfulness, he will reap from that sinfulness.

ness, not righteousness, but sinfulness. You can not repeal the law of heredity ; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. You can not annul the law of harvest ; whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. And, as in the vegetable world, so in the spiritual ; the crop is ever larger than the seed. For example : A man sows the love of money—accordingly, he reaps what he sows, namely, the love of money ; and, as the growth is ever larger than the germ, he grows fonder and fonder of money, reaping an ever intensifying love of money, the habit of miserliness ever becoming more and more confirmed. This is but a sample. What is true of avarice is also true of intemperance, indolence, obstinacy, skepticism, moral obtuseness, and so on. And the crop is ever larger

Hosea viii. 7.

than the seed. He that sows wind shall reap whirlwind. That is to say : Every man, in sheer virtue of the law of heredity, is evermore intensifying his own moral character ; or, to borrow an expression from zoology, he is evermore duplicating himself, as do the polyps, by a process of gemmation. And so it comes to pass that bad men are ever growing worse and worse, even as, thank God, good men are ever growing better and better. And this leads me to speak for a moment of the merciful side of this law of heredity or harvest ; for, while that which is

born of the flesh is flesh, and can never be anything but flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit, and can never be anything but spirit. While he that soweth unto

Gal. vi. 8. his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (moral dissolution and decomposition, which

is the second death), he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life (the blissful life that is immortally cumulative). The Christian life is a process of celestial crystallization; gracious impulses becoming transfigured into gracious habits. This is the ideal estate as conceived by the disciple whom Jesus loved; "Who-

I John iii. 9 soever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he can

not sin because he is begotten of God." And so shall be realized the happy formula of the saintly Augustine—*beata necessitas boni*, the blessed necessity of being good. Yea,

Rev. iii. 12. he that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall

go out thence no more. This, then, is our third point: Man is under the law of heredity.

And now, fourthly, God is the author of this law of heredity. You all admit, for God is the Author of this Law of Heredity. it is one of the deliverances of modern

science, that the law of heredity holds in the natural world. And the natural world is the complement of the spiritual. Beware, young friends, of falling into polytheism, worshipping, as do the heathen, various deities, adoring the God of Nature as though he were a different Deity from the God of Morals. No, there is but one God. For though there are

I. Cor. viii. 5, 6. that are called gods many and lords many,
whether in heaven or on earth, yet to us

there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom
are all things, and we through him. Hear
Deut. vi. 3. then, O Israel, the Lord our God is one

Lord. And so the one Lord our God is the author of this law of heredity alike in the natural world and in the spiritual world. And now, observe, you do not question God's righteousness in respect to the law of heredity for the physical world. In fact, it is a great clew for human guidance. Take that sample of the law of heredity—reaping precisely what we sow—why, it is the farmer's very inspiration. Just because he knows that if he sows corn, he will reap from what he has sown corn, and not thorns, he will go forth in the approaching spring-days, and, no matter how forbidding the skies, he will sow his corn in supremest confidence. You do not blame God for this law of sequence, or rather con-

sequence, or the law of heredity, in the natural world. Why, then, do you blame God for the same law in the spiritual world? Would you have two Gods, a God of law in the material world, and a God of whim in the spiritual world? This, then, is our fourth point: God is the author of the law of heredity.

**The Divine Hard-
ening the Result of
Stable Law.** And now we begin to see how it was that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Let me re-

capitulate the points: first, man is morally free; secondly, man is under law; thirdly, man is under the law of heredity; fourthly, God is the author of this law of heredity. And so, fifthly, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Not that he hardened it directly—perish the thought! Let no

James i. 13.

man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God can not be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man. But he hardened Pharaoh's heart indirectly. That is to say: He treated Pharaoh as a free man, declining to interfere with his own divine law of heredity, but allowing it to take its natural course. In fact, we are repeatedly told that Pharaoh hard-

Exodus viii. 15.

ened his own heart. For example: "When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord

Exodus viii. 32.

had said ;" again : " But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go ;" once more : " When Pharaoh saw the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his

Exodus ix. 34.

heart." Thus the phrase, " The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart " is used interchangeably with the phrase, " Pharaoh hardened his own heart." It was a striking instance of the

James i. 13-16.

apostle's pedigree of sin : " Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God is untried in evil, and he himself tempteth no man : but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed : then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin : and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death : be not deceived, my beloved brethren." We see, then, how God hardened Pharaoh's heart ; He hardened it, not because he willed to harden it, but because he willed to treat Pharaoh according to stable law. I take my stand here on the platform of scientific philosophy itself ; vindicating God on the basis of that very " nature " which you are so fond of saying is " inexorable." Would you, let me ask again, have a God of caprice ? No, young man, be not deceived ;

Gal. vi. 7.

God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Pharaoh's Case
Typical.

Alas, Pharaoh's case is a daily phenomenon. True, his obstinacy was a factor in the divine plan. For so God himself announced to

Exodus ix. 16.

Pharaoh : "For this cause have I upheld thee, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

When we remember that it was the defiant and sacrilegious obstinacy of Pharaoh which proved the occasion of the stupendous plagues of Egypt, and the triumphant exodus of Israel through the Red sea, and the subsequent countless acknowledgments of Jehovah's absolute supremacy from the day Moses chanted his triumphal ode in Arabia to this day when I am speaking to you from a pulpit in this Western hemisphere, we are forced to confess with St. Paul that it

Rom. ix. 17.

was for this very purpose that God raised Pharaoh up, that he might show in him his power, and that his name might be published abroad in all the earth. Verily,

Psalms lxxvi. 10.

The wrath of man praiseth thee ;

The remainder of wrath thou girdest on (as a sword).

Nevertheless Pharaoh acted throughout just as he pleased. He was cruel and proud and stubborn ; and he acted out his own nature. And just because he acted freely, he acted

guiltily. He chose to sow pride; and he reaped what he sowed, namely, pride. He chose to sow obstinacy; and he reaped what he sowed, namely, obstinacy. And the harvest of pride and obstinacy was, of course, larger than the original seed. Pharaoh's case was unique only because of the attendant and subsequent marvelous events. His guilt radically surveyed, is a daily guilt; and therefore his fate—namely, a hardened heart—is a daily fate. How many persons there are all around you who, observant it may be of all the amenities of life, are nevertheless callous to all distinctly sacred influences, proof alike against the promises of God's grace and the menaces of God's law. And observe how they became thus callous. In youthful years, carried away by life's gaieties, they sowed procrastination, or neglect of the Saviour's gracious invitation: and now, in mature years, when choice has hardened into habit, and this in sheer virtue of the law of the harvest, (which is really a law of heredity), they are reaping from that comparatively little and carelessly sown seed an enormous and dreadful crop of moral paralysis or soul-coma. That is to say: God has hardened their hearts by allowing them, in accordance with the law of heredity, to harden their own hearts. Here is the key to the awful paradox of the Parable-speaker:—

“ Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance ; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables : because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith :—

Matt. xiii. 12-15.

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand.

And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive :
 For this people's heart is waxed gross,
 And their ears are dull of hearing,
 And their eyes they have closed ;
 Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,
 And hear with their ears,
 And understand with their heart,
 And should turn again,
 And I should heal them.

That is to say : Whoever is susceptible to truth, to him shall truth be given, and he shall have abundance ; with the increase of susceptibility shall come an increase of truth, and with the increase of truth shall come an increase of susceptibility. But whoever is not susceptible to truth, from him shall be taken away even what he hath ; not only his opportunity of hearing truth, but also his capacity for moral susceptibility itself.

NOTE.—Compare Juvenal's bitter saying :—

'Tis true, poor Codrus nothing had to boast ;
 And yet poor Codrus all that nothing lost.

And, therefore, in these hardened hearers of the gospel is fulfilled Isaiah's mournful saying:—

Go and say to this people :
Isaiah vi. 9-10. Hear ye on still, but understand not ;
And see you on still, but perceive not :
Make the heart of this people gross,
And make their ears dull,
And smear their eyes ;
Lest they see with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And turn, and be healed.

It recalls a kindred saying in the parable of the intrusted talents: "Take away the talent from him." For, as there is a talent for trade, or architecture, for music, for oratory, so there is a talent for Godliness. And the talent for Godliness, even though it be the only talent intrusted to me, is the greatest of talents, for it enables me to become Godlike. But the talent for Godliness, if laid up in a napkin or buried in the earth—no matter how carefully—is a forfeited talent. For, as Horace Bushnell has powerfully shown, "The capacity for religion is extirpated by disuse."

That is to say : If a man does not use, or put out to interest, his talent for religion, the day will come, and this in simple virtue of the law of heredity, when the talent itself will be taken away from him, and his very capacity for becoming a Christian will be forever lost. There is a disease called ossification, as, for example, when an artery is changed into bone. There is such a thing as the possibility, and, alas, frequency, of moral ossification, or spiritual petrification. Have you never read of a conscience seared

I Tim. iv. 2. with a hot iron? Yes, there is such a

thing as a cauterized moral sense, henceforth forever insensitive. It is the nearest approach to the unforgivable sin—the sin against the Holy Ghost, or all

Matt. xii. 31-32. gracious influences—a sin which, in the very nature of the case, in sheer virtue of

the law of heredity—can never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come. God forbid that any of us should know by woeful experience the unspeakable misery of having committed the unpardonable sin!

Heb. iii. 7-11. Rather let us listen to the Holy Ghost as he saith :—

Psalm xev. 7-11. To-day, if ye will hear his voice,

Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation,
Like as in the day of trial in the wilderness,

When your fathers tempted me by proving me,
 And saw my works forty years.
 Wherefore I was displeased with the generation ;
 And I said : They are a people who do always err in heart.
 And they do not know my ways :
 Wherefore, I have sworn in my wrath :—
 They shall not enter into my rest.

Let me conclude with three thoughts.

Each Man Responsible for his own Character.

First, each man is responsible for his own character. For each man has the liberty of sowing whatever habit he pleases ; and the harvest he reaps is the aggregate of his habits, that is to say, his character. Accordingly, it is for each man himself to say whether his character shall be good or bad ; whether it shall grow better or grow worse. Almighty God is unchangeable, and therefore he will not change his law of heredity. But Almighty God is also gracious, and therefore he offers you grace to take advantage of the law of heredity ; for it is one of the blessed boons of this law that he who soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. Recall the parable of the Sower : While there was but one kind of seed—even the seed of the kingdom, which is the word of God—there were various kinds of soil:—the trod-

Gal. vi. 3.

Matt. xiii. 3-9, 18-23.

den wayside, the rocky ground, the thorny ground, the good ground. And each hearer of the gospel is directly responsible for the condition of the soil of his own heart. The preacher is not the only person who assumes a tremendous responsibility when public worship begins; every one of his listeners shares an equal responsibility. The preacher is responsible for the kind of seed he sows, and for the manner of his sowing it; his hearers are responsible for the treatment they give to the seed. There are some things which the preacher can do. He can sow the truth as it is in Jesus, and he can sow it everywhere, over all kinds of soil; that is, he can sow faithfully. But there is one thing which the preacher can not do. He can not make the soil of the heart morally genial, heartily receptive of the truth. Paul could not do it. Gabriel can not do it. Even the Divine Son of God can not do it, unless, indeed, he first demolish personal responsibility and the very foundations of moral order and government throughout his empire. It is a constituent part of God's method of moral administration that each man must decide for himself as to whether truth in Jesus shall impress him or not. In other words, the final responsibility here is not with the seed, not with the sower, not with the divine owner of the field. The final responsibility is with the soil itself. And for the condition of the

soil each hearer of the glad tidings is directly and solemnly accountable. Behold, then, the goodness and severity of God toward them that fell; severity; but toward thee, God's goodness; if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. The same sun which melts the ice and quickens the wheat hardens the clay and quickens the tare. The same Shechinah which was a pillar of light to the Israelite was a pillar of night to the Egyptian. The same child which is set for the rising of many in Israel is also set for the falling of many. The same gospel which is a savor from life unto life to them that are being saved is a savor from death unto death to them that are perishing. The same Jesus, who is a living cornerstone to the believer, is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to the disbeliever. The same law of heredity accounts for Abel the accepted and Cain the rejected, for Moses the emancipator and Pharaoh the oppressor, for John the beloved and Judas the reprobate, for Baxter the saint and Paine the atheist. There is fatalism here: but it is the fatalism of the law of heredity or harvest: Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. God is responsible for this law of the harvest, and

Rom. xi. 22.

Exodus xiv. 20.

Luke ii. 34.

I. Cor. ii. 15, 16.

I. Peter ii. 4-8.

in this sense he hardens men's hearts. Man is responsible for the soil, and in this sense he hardens his own heart.

Secondly, each man is responsible for his own destiny; and this just because he is responsible for his own character. A profound truth lies in the adage of Sallust; "Every man is the architect of his own fortune." Daily character is shaping future destiny.

For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled;
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.

—Longfellow.

And so it comes to pass that the future state is strictly a state of retribution, re-tributing, paying back again in the same coinage, and this at the momentous rate of compound interest: that is to say: This world is the sowing time, and the next world is the reaping time, and the harvest will be of the same kind as the seed, only vastly larger. Give heed, then, to the solemn prophecy of the Angel of the

Rev. xxii. 11.

Apocalypse. "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still, (yet more): and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still, (yet more): and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still, (yet

more): and he that is holy, let him be made holy still, (yet more)." Take heed then how you live. "Sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny."

An Appeal to the Young.

Lastly, let me make a special appeal to those of you who are young. Our topic is peculiarly suited to your case, for you are now in a plastic state, forming your own character, and so electrotyping your own eternal destiny. Yes, young man, during these blithesome college days, you are in all probability determining unalterably the character of your manhood, and so the character of your eternity. Believe me, it is much easier for you to become a Christian to-day than it will be ten years hence, even as it is much harder for you to become a Christian to-day than it was ten years ago. The nearer the cradle, the nearer to Jesus.

Heaven lies about us in our infancy.—*Wordsworth.*

Prov. viii. 17.

Ecc. xii. i.

Yes, the blessed Father loves them that love him, and those that seek him early shall find him. Remember then thy Creator and thy Redeemer now in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thy moral nature, no longer plastic and formative shall be confirmed in the habit of sin, forever petrified into

Gen. vi. 3.

the adamant of moral insensibility. For God's spirit will not always strive with man. The day of salvation, just because it is a day of definite hours, and not an indefinite *æon*, will end in evening and eternal night. Alas, how many, having delayed to accept the Saviour's gracious invitation, and so having entered into the eternal night, will bitterly realize in their own experience the Nazarene's awful

John vii. 34.

saying to his obdurate countrymen :—
 "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me, and where I am, ye can not come." Beware of the fearful retribution of a self-hardened heart.

Prov. i. 24-31.

Because I have called, and ye have refused ;
 I have stretched out my hand, and no one regarded ;
 And ye have set at nought all my counsel,
 And would none of my reproof :
 I also will laugh in your calamity,
 I will mock when your fear cometh ;
 When your fear cometh like a tempest,
 And your calamity cometh like a whirlwind ;
 When distress and anguish come upon you.
 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ;
 They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.
 Because they hated knowledge,
 And chose not the fear of Jehovah ;
 They consented not to my counsel,
 They despised all my reproof.
 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
 And be filled with their own devices.

That is to say : They have reaped what they sowed ; they did not take advantage of the prerogative of moral freedom on its heavenward side, and, therefore, according to the law of heredity, they consigned themselves to hardness of heart, and so to eternal petrification. Oh, be true, then, young man, to your present capacity for becoming a son of God, and so an heir to the blissful immortality. To-day are golden moments, golden because flitting. Cherish, above rubies and diamonds, every heavenward aspiration, however momentary. Quench not the Spirit, that blessed force which, even now, I trust, is quickening your better instincts. On this day of prayer for colleges, fall into line with the prayers of saintly parents, and conscientious teachers, and your own better impulses.

I. Thess. v. 19.

Psalm i. 12.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
And ye perish in the way ;
For quickly will his anger kindle.
Blessed are all who put their trust in him.

Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

May God this very day take away from every one of us the heart of stone, and give to every one of us a heart of flesh.

From the Litany.

From hardness of heart, and contempt
of thy word and commandment, good
Lord, deliver us !

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